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Between Optimism and Opportunism: Deconstructing 'African Management' Discourse in South Africa (abstract)

This dissertation is about 'African management' in South Africa, an Afrocentric perspective that emerged in the early 1990s. The indigenous notion of *ubuntu* ('humane-ness') is a key concept in this regard. The dissertation provides an analysis of the emergence and evolution of 'African management' along three *flows*: emergence and externalisation, distribution and utilisation. Furthermore, the discourse is contextualised in a historical perspective (colonialism, apartheid and transition) and in a political perspective (e.g. strategies for business transformation) and subsequently interpreted in terms of identification. Although there is a consensus about the general principles that characterise this management philosophy, the research shows that actors in South Africa attribute different meanings to 'African management' ranging from normative and optimistic interpretations to rather opportunistic versions. Overall, the debate around *ubuntu* and 'African management' is considerably polarised. Metaphysically, this management philosophy can also be read as a call for dialogue in organisations, both within South Africa and beyond.